

CLAIMS

1. A project docket management apparatus comprising:

a control structure including a processor configured to execute a control program and

communicate with a user;

a memory coupled to the processor and configured to store a plurality of records associated with a project, and a plurality of records storing attributes including access levels associated with a plurality of users;

an authorization structure coupled to the processor and configured to selectively allow the users to log into the control structure and access the records to selectively add, edit, modify and delete project records depending on the users' access levels; and

a communication structure coupled to the processor including a notification structure configured to periodically distribute information to project personnel based on predefined criteria including dates or activities.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:

the authorization structure provides the ability for a user with an administrative access level to add, edit, modify and delete users and their respective attributes including access levels.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:

the notification structure is configured to notify a predetermined group of users in advance of a predetermined deadline based at least in part on the users' attributes.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

an approval structure coupled to the processor and configured to receive an approval from a client user regarding a predetermined task, and to notify appropriate project personnel to perform the predetermined task.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:

the memory is configured to store documents along with attributes including a date stamp; and

the communication structure is configured to electronically publish a document on the Internet and display the date stamp attribute associated therewith.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:

the communication structure includes an electronic filing structure configured to electronically file a document with another computer system; and
the memory is configured to store attributes of the document including a date stamp.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein:

the communication structure is configured to decode electronic communications to determine dates relevant to the communication; and
the control structure is configured to docket the dates.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein:

the notification structure is configured to notify a predetermined group of users in advance of a predetermined deadline based at least in part on the users' attributes.

9. The apparatus of claim 7, further comprising:

an approval structure coupled to the processor and configured to receive an approval from a client user regarding a predetermined task, and to notify appropriate project personnel to perform the predetermined task.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

the notification structure is configured to notify a predetermined group of users in advance of a predetermined deadline based at least in part on the users' attributes.

11. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein:

the control structure is configured to synchronize records with a remote computer by flagging downloaded records sent to the remote computer, and at a later time, comparing any uploaded records received from the remote computer, and reconciling the records.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein:

the notification structure is configured to notify a predetermined group of users in advance of a predetermined deadline based at least in part on the users' attributes.

5 13. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

a contract administrator structure configured to store agreed upon contract terms and an agreed upon a payment plan and deliverable plan between a buyer of a predetermined service and a seller of a predetermined service;

10 an escrow structure configured to record a deposit representing an amount of money in an escrow account, according to the agreed upon payment plan; and

wherein the escrow structure is configured to record a deliverable representing the seller performing the predetermined service, and when the deliverable is delivered to and approved by the buyer, to transfer from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the agreed upon payment plan.

15 14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein:

the communication structure is configured to decode electronic communications to determine dates relevant to the communication; and

the control structure is configured to docket the dates.

20 15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein:

the notification structure is configured to notify a predetermined group of project personnel in advance of predetermined deadlines.

25 16. The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:

an approval structure coupled to the processor and configured to receive an approval from a client user regarding a predetermined task, and to notify appropriate project personnel to perform the predetermined task.

30 17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein:

the notification structure is configured to notify a predetermined group of project personnel in advance of predetermined deadlines.

18. A method of managing a project between a buyer and seller comprising the steps of:

the buyer and seller agreeing on a payment plan and deliverable plan;
the buyer depositing an amount of money in an escrow account, according to the agreed upon payment plan; and

the seller performing the predetermined service, and when the deliverable is delivered to and approved by the buyer, receiving from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the agreed upon payment plan;

the seller maintaining an electronic docket related to the project to insure that predetermined deadlines are met.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

the seller entering information related to the project into a server computer stored as records, where the server computer is accessible over a computer network;

the seller granting access to the buyer to view information related to the project; and

the buyer accessing the processor over the computer network to view status information related to the project.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:

the buyer authorizing actions by the seller via a status information display generated by the server computer and communicated to the buyer over the computer network.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:

the seller filing a document with another computer system via an electronic communication; and

automatically decoding the electronic communications to determine dates relevant to the communication;

docketing the dates; and

automatically notifying the seller of the dates in advance.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the steps of:
the buyer authorizing actions by the seller via a status information display generated by
the server computer; and

5 communicating the authorization to the seller over the computer network.

23. The method of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:
synchronizing records between the server computer and a remote computer by flagging
downloaded records sent to the remote computer, and at a later time, comparing any uploaded
10 records received from the remote computer, and reconciling the records.

24. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of:
notifying the seller in advance of a predetermined deadline.

15 25. The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of:
notifying the seller in advance of a predetermined deadline.